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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001453

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2016

TAGS: IR PGOV MOPS

SUBJECT: PRT MAYSAN: OFFICIALS WORRIED OVER IA OFFENSIVE

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Darrell Jenks for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Maysan reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: The opening days of a PRT-organized training course were marred by ongoing arguments between the political and technocratic attendees, with the political attendees seeming to intimidate the other participants and prevent their speaking independently to the PRT. The Maysani delegation left the conference over a day early due to fears that Iraqi Army (IA) operations in the province were imminent (Note: The training course was held on Talil AB due to the inability of the PRT to travel to Maysan due to security concerns. End Note.) The episode is an example of how the provincial government tries to restrict the PRT's access to and interaction with the governorate. It also confirms the high level of anxiety of Maysani officials over the possibility of a GOI offensive their province. End Summary.

¶3. (C) May 6 marked the first day of a PRT-organized seven month training seminar for Maysani officials in comprehensive planning and mapping. The training is comprised of ten three-day modules with a two week break between each module. The first session was attended by Chief Advisor to the Governor of Maysan and reputed Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) member Zaid Kalaf Hoshy, Provincial Reconstruction Development Chairman Mohan Mahy Shibeen, and various technical division heads. The group planned on staying in Dhi Qar from May 6-8 and sleeping in a local hotel.

¶4. (C) There was a sharp division between the politicians and the technocrats over the agenda and subject matter of the course. Zaid and Mohan lobbied strongly for the sessions to focus exclusively on planning the "new city" of Amarah (Note: The new city plan is a pet project of Maysan Governor Maliki. End Note). The rest of the participants wanted training that would benefit their particular areas of expertise. Unable to reach a resolution on base, Zaid promised they would hold a meeting in their hotel on the night of May 6 to find a compromise.

¶5. (C) On the morning of May 7, Zaid announced that the group would have to return to Maysan later that day due to the possibility that security operations would prevent their return at a later date. Attendees again argued over the content of the training and the discussion became heated. Zaid seemed preoccupied and asked several times to use the internet. At noon Zaid said that the group needed to leave urgently, and the delegation left to return to Maysan within the hour.

¶6. (C) Comment: The tension and distrust between the technocrats and politicians were obvious and grew throughout the day. Some of the former would have liked to continue the training but were worried about contradicting the politicians. Our interpreter believed that the officials were reluctant to leave the technocrats unescorted for fear they would give the PRT reports on the province that contradicted the party line. This attempt to control the officials is similar to other attempts by the provincial

government to control the PRT's access to information. To this date the provincial government has refused to work with our employee that lives in Amarah and attempted to control site surveys for potential PRT projects. The abrupt departure of the delegation shows the degree of anxiety Maysani officials feel over the possibility of GOI operations in their province. End Comment.

CROCKER